

# SCOTTISH ART REVIEW



VOL. VI No. 2

2/6

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# The SCOTTISH ART REVIEW

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R. H. WESTWATER

## JOAN EARDLEY



JOAN EARDLEY

CHILDREN, PORT GLASGOW  
*Oil on canvas, 65 x 58 ins.*

AMONG PAINTERS of her own generation, Joan Eardley has certainly made the most considerable impression on Scottish artistic opinion; and she has chosen, wisely as I think, to expand beyond the boundaries of her very early and complete success in Scotland, extending it with equal authority to London.

It was in London, in fact, that Miss Eardley spent her childhood and the always vitally formative years of adolescence. But from the beginning of her actual art training, Scotland—nay, Glasgow—can claim her, and does so with

pride. She may now be said to 'belong to Glasgow' and Glasgow, or at least a very vivid and characteristic part of it, 'belongs to her'.

In 1939 Joan Eardley came to Glasgow at the age of 17, and studied at the School of Art from January, 1940 till June, 1943. She was fortunate enough, in years when there was no glut of students, to receive more than the normal meed of direction from her teachers, and particularly from Hugh Adam Crawford, now Principal of the Dundee School of Art. A quotation from a note of his on Miss Eardley, which lies before me, provides admirably the



Joan Eardley

key to the character of her work.

... Eardley accepted this teaching as a duckling accepts water. I remember times when I would suggest that what a painting required was an intense blue, red, yellow, white, or black, somewhere about ... there, and left her. On my return I invariably found that, not only had she placed the colour correctly, but that its proportion, intensity, and application were better than one could have done oneself, and one was left with a feeling of envy.'

That, from a very experienced teacher who is properly disinclined to over-estimate the abilities of students, is a tribute indeed. And it puts a finger on the central quality of Miss Eardley's painting, a rare and most desirable quality: the capacity to conceive and plan a finished work completely in advance, by what combination of intellect and instinct no one can say, and then, fully armed with certainty, to execute it with the directness and spontaneity usually associated only with the felicitous sketch.

The positive, forceful character of this student was shown at the end of her art-school training. Most art students aspire, more or less vaguely, to be professional painters, and speak with a natural (though unworthy) contempt of the teaching profession. But their protestations nearly always fade before the stern demand of economic necessity, and teachers the majority of them become, if they do not forsake altogether the artistic vocation. Not so Miss Eardley, who, in order to eat, became for two years a joiner's labourer, rather than risk being 'submerged' in the relative security of a school-teacher's life, from which the return to a professional painter's career is rarely indeed accomplished.

But in 1946 she had the opportunity of going to the post-graduate school at Hospitalfield, Arbroath, then under the direction of the late James Cowie. No visible influence of Cowie's



JOAN EARDLEY

BOY WITH COMIC

Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 ins.

strong, intellectual attitude or style remains in her work, as it has done, often too evidently, in that of other Hospitalfield graduates. But it is more than possible that some of her serious approach and thorough pre-meditation derive from Cowie's example.

Leaving Hospitalfield, Miss Eardley spent the period from January till June, 1948 in a post-graduate studio at the Glasgow School of Art, and the work done there earned her two travelling scholarships in 1948: the first from the School of Art itself, and another from the Royal Scottish Academy.

She used these for travel and study in France and Italy, finding the atmosphere and people of the latter country the more sympathetic to her own temperament. Massaccio and Giotto were the old masters who most engaged her interest, while in Paris the accepted leaders of the contemporary movement, Picasso, Matisse, Braque and Rouault appealed to her. She also admired Chagall, and I am sure that she studied



JOAN EARDLEY

THE STOVE

*Oil on canvas, 30 x 16 ins.*

these and other painters' works with much more than usual concentration. Indeed, an eye-witness has told me that he once observed her standing perfectly motionless in front of a painting by Bonnard, in a London gallery, for something over an hour and a half! But much as she no doubt learned and absorbed, she seemed capable of immediately adapting the lessons to her own highly individual uses. I do not know of any young painter of merit who has been exposed to these very powerful influences who has so signally escaped any trace of the 'sedulous ape'. An Eardley is always and inevitably an Eardley, whatever sources outside of her own strong talent may help to swell its flow.

It must have been about the time of her return from Europe—about nine years ago—that I first saw pictures by Joan Eardley in an exhibition of the Society of Scottish Artists. I knew nothing of her then, and it is a



JOAN EARDLEY ANDREW

*Oil on canvas, 28 x 9 ins.*



mark of the quality of these paintings that on sight I assumed them to be loaned works, presumably by some French painter, young maybe, but already worthy of being invited to contribute along with other, widely recognised, foreign artists. I shall not forget the shock of pleasure I experienced on finding that she was, instead, an authentic new star in the some-

JOAN EARDLEY  
OLD WOMAN AT THE  
FIRESIDE

*Ink and chalk drawing,  
23 x 28 ins.*



JOAN EARDLEY

LITTLE LARCHWOOD  
*Oil on canvas, 20 x 60 ins.*

what sparsely spangled Scottish firmament.

I had occasion to broadcast about that exhibition, and having enthused to an unusual degree over Miss Eardley's exhibits I said something like this: 'For all I know, Miss Eardley may be a slender and willowy blonde. The strength of her work may be just one of these curious inversions sometimes found in women artists. But I am willing to take a fair-sized bet that, in fact, she is a straight-browed, strong-jawed brunette, with a physique equal to that of most men.' I have had the pleasure of meeting her since then, and my bet would have been perfectly safe!

Strength then, well-marshalled, thoroughly controlled, and directed with great singleness of mind, is the completely natural, the unvarying core of Miss Eardley's work. Yet she is not an 'unfeminine' painter, for I think that any really discerning eye would always detect the fact that her canvases are from the hand of a woman.

To begin with, her main choice of subject-matter is the life, personality and activity of children. They are the children whom she has made her friends in the Rottenrow of Glasgow. About her treatment of them there is certainly nothing in the least sentimental. For her they



JOAN EARDLEY

WINTER LANDSCAPE  
*Oil on canvas, 25 x 60 ins.*

are beings of mobile, ever-changing interest, and, most important, models always easily accessible. But her attitude towards them, seen against a squalid background of infinite pictorial potentialities, shows an understanding of their nature which would be impossible, I think, for almost any man. The nine illustrations here show clearly the wealth of expressiveness which she extracts, sometimes humorously, sometimes with a restrained pathos from this neglected material. The colour-plate (p. 20) serves to show, too, how she finds a vivid fire of colour flowering fiercely in the uncompromising grey morass of a 'depressed area'; and comparison of her street-scene with a photograph of the street itself (page 6) illustrates another very important fact about her work: that however she may choose to select, modify, or conventionalise her forms, her seeing is firmly rooted in closely observed fact, whose character is never diluted or fantasticated.

However, like the rest of us, and no matter how *belle* her *nostalgie de la boue* may be, Miss Eardley sometimes needs fresh air. The complement to her Glasgow work is found in the landscapes she paints on the other side of the country; landscapes which deal with an atmosphere as fresh and clean as that of her street pictures is the reverse. Here she reveals herself as a romantic, or at any rate a romantic of another sort. The strength remains, the authorship cannot be mistaken, but the mood is more contemplative, more elegiac and gentle. But whatever the mood, the basic preoccupation is what can be said in paint, most forcibly, directly and naturally.

Born as recently as 1921, Miss Eardley has already had deserved recognition and success far beyond the lot of most young painters. Her shows in Edinburgh and London were virtual 'sell-outs'; her pictures are to be found in many important public and private collections; and last year she was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy at the early age of 34.

Comparison of  
*Back Street—Children Playing*  
illustrated below with the  
photograph of the street itself  
shows how 'the artist's  
seeing is firmly rooted in  
closely observed fact.'

Joan Eardley

All Academies have suffered from the results of over-enthusiasm in occasionally electing young painters on the strength of a brief flash of never-to-be-repeated achievement. That is one reason why Academies are so conservative. But the Royal Scottish Academy is not in the least likely, I think, ever to rue the day when it elected Miss Eardley.

No doubt time will enlarge the content of her work, sometimes at present over-simplified in the interests of forcible statement. Greater subtlety will join hands with her unfailing vitality. But Miss Eardley's character, and the quality of her mind and talent make it inconceivable, to me at any rate, that she should ever fail to develop steadily from her brilliant beginnings.



Photograph of Shop and Angel Close, Rottenrow.



JOAN EARDLEY

BACK STREET—CHILDREN PLAYING  
Oil on canvas, 13½ × 36 ins.

ALEC STURROCK

## KIRKCALDY'S RICHES



WILLIAM MCTAGGART

PREACHING OF ST. COLUMBA  
*Oil on canvas, 60 x 84 ins.*

THE ONLY railway station I know large enough to contain an art gallery is Grand Central, New York, which does in fact include one in its fabulous amenities. On a smaller scale Kirkcaldy boasts a conjunction almost as unexpected. Art gallery and station lie less than a stone's throw apart, though the museum's trim frontage and flowerbeds face pointedly away from the smoke and platform bustle.

But their neighbourliness caused me, after a recent visit, to step almost straight out of the gallery into a railway carriage.

My head was still swimming a little from the assault of the Kirkcaldy collection and in particular from the effect of two rooms devoted, one to the work of S. J. Peploe, and the other to that of William McTaggart the

elder. And what struck me forcibly was the fact that the pictures I could no longer see still occupied my mind to the virtual exclusion of the little panels strung before my eyes across the opposite wall of the compartment. Their after-image lingered like a bright light's after the eyes are shut.

I wondered why. And I came to the conclusion, since the effect was a mental rather than a physical one, that what the mind's eye retained was the communication of passion—passion for paint, for the expression through it of passion for light, and colour, and form and the natural scene.

For a small town, Kirkcaldy is unusually fortunate in its civic art collection which I saw under the pleasant guidance of the Curator, Mr. Henry Willies. The galleries themselves





S. J. PEPLAE

STILL LIFE — APPLES AND PEARS

Oil on canvas, 19½ × 23½ ins.



S. J. PEPLAE

BEN MORE FROM IONA

Oil on canvas, 28 × 30 ins.

are sufficiently compact and modern—they were completed, the gift of the late Mr. John Nairn, in 1928—to provide ideal accommodation for paintings on the small, contemporary scale. In addition, through its close connections

with the noted collector and patron, Mr. John W. Blyth, a leading citizen of the town, the gallery has, so to speak, the run both of his own collection, from which loans are often on show, and of the Scottish Modern Arts Association. In the absence of a gallery of its own the Association houses more than 250 of its purchases, acquired under the presidency of Mr. Blyth and former chairmen, in the Kirkcaldy building. The result is a collection which for variety and quality must be unsurpassed in any municipal gallery of similar size in Scotland if not farther afield, informed in addition to a considerable extent by an individual taste.

But if the variety is remarkable—one need only mention such names as Sickert, Steer, Vuillard, Corot, Spencer-Gore, Gilman, Fantin-Latour, Boudin, Lowry, Wingate, Hornel, Cadell and Gillies to illustrate it—the concentrated riches of the two rooms I have already mentioned, the Peploe and McTaggart rooms, are not less so. I will not deny certain doubts as to the wisdom of such concentrations from the artist's own point of view. Peploe's paintings look their best, as I remember seeing them in his own house, one to a wall, two

or three to a room; and the Victorian McTaggart painted on a grand scale which in a small modern gallery tends to overpower in the mass. But these, after all, are problems common to every show of art. Few



visitors would thank gallery authorities for doing full justice to individual works by showing only a handful at a time. In default of unlimited space, the gallery-goer must accept some of the conventions of the stamp album, and be thankful that single-line hanging at least is now the general rule.

Peplow is for some tastes, I believe, too cerebral, too sophisticated a painter to satisfy completely. His later work—and particularly the brilliant still life arrangements for which he is best known—lacks it is true the stern, skeletal quality, the explicit revelation of the striving after truth to be found in the work of the master from whom it ultimately derives, Cézanne. But one wonders whether those who demand a like quality in the contemporary descendants of Cézanne are not encouraging a certain hypocrisy on the artists' part. The best stained glass is Gothic; but a modern pastiche of the Gothic style is hardly more, it seems to me, than antiquarianism. To build on the foundation of Cézanne's harsh struggle with the intractabilities of form is a legitimate progression; to reproduce again all the outward signs of that struggle is to mark time. The bones and sinews of Peplow's formal arrangements are not obvious; but the precise, economical finality of his pictures guarantees their presence just below the surface. And how varied that surface is.

There is the early period when the art-



LESLIE HUNTER

STILL LIFE

Oil on panel, 20 x 16 ins.

ist's idols were Manet, Hals, and Rembrandt. The tones are low and restrained but the sweeping freedom of the brush-strokes in, for instance, *The Smiling Girl* produces an immediacy and a sense of confidence that the passage of 50 years has in no way diminished. In the fluent still life of the same period, with its rich highlights gleaming from the dark surfaces of bottles and glasses and fruit and silver one may find stilliform trails of thick pigment standing out from the surface, little stalactites that might even yet

be in process of formation. Tension is one of the secrets of the artist, and in Peplow's work of this time the tension is produced by the



W. G. GILLIES

STILL LIFE

Oil on canvas, 13 x 15 ins.

contrast between freedom and verve of execution and control of form and design.

Then there are some of those small jewel-like panels, painted with even greater freedom and dash (often in the company of J. D. Fergusson) in Paris and on the French coast, which mark the transition in the immediate pre-1914 years to the colourist mode. Now, as Stanley Cursiter says in his biography, 'Peplow had moved to the other side of a barrier that it is difficult to define, but of which we are very conscious; on the one side of it lie pictures which have their main interest in tone, and on the other the main interest is in colour.'

Hereafter comes the succession of still life, the brown crocks and the dry, bright pink and yellow roses and flowered fabrics, a succession divided up in time only by comparatively minor stylistic variations—the increased angularities that hint at cubism, the temporary broadening of dark outlines into cloisons; and at the same time landscapes taking in with their broad sweep of vision crisp, sunlit, Iona beaches—the touch here as square as that of Raeburn, whose Edinburgh studio Peplow occupied for a time—lusher glimpses of lowland Scotland like the highly spontaneous *Sweetheart Abbey* (see page 22) with its swift mixture of 'dry' and 'wet' paint, palette knife and brush; and the hot blue foliage and solid trunks of palm trees at Antibes. And finally the occasional figure study, such as the thinly painted, flowing sketch entitled, *Peggy McRae*, like a whorl of cigarette smoke on still air.

This is a startling range of accomplishment to be encompassed in one small room of some 25 paintings. And Peplow was indeed a startlingly accomplished as well as an inherently decorative painter. The one thing he hardly ever did was to paint big (though I have seen



DAVID A. DONALDSON

PINK ROOM—YOUNG GIRL  
Oil on panel, 21 × 26 ins.

a single mural-like, Gauguinesque composition incorporating a savage idol and worshipping native figures which seemed to have escaped the artist's habit of destroying all work that failed to reach the high standards he imposed on himself).

William McTaggart, on the other hand, except in his early genre days, of which this collection includes one example typically entitled, *Helping Granny*, almost always painted on the large scale. And some of his best later work is at Kirkcaldy.

McTaggart is often described as an Impressionist independent of the French movement. If this were strictly true, it would be as remarkable as the parallel story that Wilkie had seen no Dutch or Flemish genre when he produced *Pitlessie Fair*. At all events McTaggart was Scotland's greatest plein air painter, with a tremendous feeling for the light and colour and breezy movement of the Scottish coastal scene. The *Preaching of St. Columba*, with its wide, calm sweep of bay and the little figure gesturing from a rock, before a crowd who seem, like the children in so many other works by McTaggart, half material, half imagined,

*Continued on page 22.*

## CURATOR'S CHOICE

The Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland here introduces a new series by writing about items under his care for which he has a particular affection.

IN a National Museum, with so much to choose from, a Curator's favourites are likely to be numerous, and indeed many of the readers of this *Review* will have seen my choice of nearly 200 of *Scotland's Ancient Treasures* in Glasgow five years ago. So this time I am choosing things which for one reason or another were not in that exhibition. The single exception is the only one that was certainly not made in Scotland. A Virgin and Child over a thousand years older than the sculptures and pictures described in the *Scottish Art Review* last Christmas by Mr. Hannah, it is nearer the simplicity of the Renaissance Madonnas than the Gothic conception of the Queen of Heaven. No earlier representation in metal is known, though two pieces of similar date have been preserved in Italy where there are even earlier, but very similar, representations painted in the Catacombs and carved on marble sarcophagi.

Here the figures are no more than 2 inches high. Mary sits in a comfortable basket chair of ordinary Roman design with high rounded back, her feet on a footstool away from draughts. The naked Child, a year or so old, sits upright on her lap and stretches out eagerly for the gift being offered by the first of the



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI on a silver flask from the Traprain Treasure.  
4TH CENTURY A.D.

Wise Men, while she supports His arm. The other two Magi advance with a similar gift: they seem to be salvers containing three things, possibly gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Wise Men are hunched deferentially, like Chinese servants. They are shown to be Orientals by their Persian dress—trousers and those 'Phrygian' caps which because they were also given to slaves on their emancipation have now come rather to be symbols of Liberty. A large area of modern repair just above shows how narrowly this scene escaped destruction when the silver parcel-gilt flask on which it is embossed was flattened before being buried at Traprain Law in East Lothian. Yet we must be grateful to our piratical ancestors who looted the piece, perhaps from northern France when the Roman Empire was being assailed from all sides about the beginning of the 5th century A.D. They were only interested in

it as bullion, but for us it is a remarkable link with the days of the Christian Rome of Constantine's successors, and it may well have been made in Rome itself. The main decoration of the flask is completed by three other Biblical scenes, including Adam and Eve, and Moses striking the rock.

Representational art was curiously slow to reach Scotland, though one might have expected it to have come with agriculture and the many crafts that spread in early times from the eastern Mediterranean. But geometric patterns were common. Nothing very realistic is known for certain before the Roman legions came, nor anything native till nearly three hundred years after the Treasure was buried at Traprain. And then among the Picts there was a remarkable burst of animal carving, mainly in the counties from Aberdeenshire to Easter Ross. The

figures are always in strict profile and a sense of rhythm, of pattern, is a feature of them. One of the loveliest, and smallest, is lightly incised on a now dirty stone.

This stag from Grantown is outstanding for the deftness and clarity of the draughtsmanship, which invites comparison with the famous realistic stags drawn by the Palaeolithic artists many thousands of years before. Both, it has been rightly said, indicate a hunter's art. Those earliest artists are thought to have drawn as part of their hunting magic; but the Picts were Christians when they carved their stone monuments and no one has convincingly guessed the significance of the animals or of



PICTISH SYMBOL-STONE FROM GRANTOWN

C. 700 A.D.

#### Curator's Choice

the many 'symbols' found with them. The Pictish mixture of realism and conventionalisation, with muscles stylised into what are called 'jointspirals' recalls the earliest Celtic art on the Continent, a millennium older. But there is a hiatus before jointspirals appear on the very stylised animals of the vigorous art that arose unexpectedly in Northumbria out of a fusion of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon ideas, for example in the illumination of the Lindisfarne Gospels about 700 A.D. Somehow the Pictish animals are related

to these, but their naturalism contrasts strongly with the contorted complexity of the illumination. With such perfection, reached apparently at a bound, Pictish art then inevitably became itself complex, while the art of its neighbours became even more florid.

Perhaps my third choice should be ascribed to a workshop of that period situated somewhere in southern Scotland that was then within Northumbria. This brooch nearly 5 inches across was found in 1826 by a shepherd on the hillside of Hunterston near Largs. It is of silver, much of it gilt or encrusted with gold wire and gold foil. On the front cheerful ribbonlike beasts in granulated

filigree occupy eight of the main panels. Characteristic of 'Hiberno-Saxon' art, and actually Anglo-Saxon not Celtic in origin, beasts like these appear to have been the inspiration of one of the commonest of Pictish symbols—the so-called elephant: art is no respecter of frontiers however much it may outwardly conform to them. Round the centre of the widest part of the brooch there are four circular 'eyes' from which curved beaks project, for centuries a typically Germanic eagle motif. While the lavish covering of the surface of the brooch with different-shaped panels of

lies. One could ask why it is set with amber bosses and not glass or enamel. But the total splendid barbaric effect and the meticulous craftsmanship which no jeweller in Scotland to-day could excel, make it one of the chief national treasures irrespective of the fun it can give the art-historian.

The fourth and last work is chosen not as a masterpiece, though I think it very good, but partly for its own sake and partly because it belongs to a school whose work should be much more widely appreciated. The wonderful flowering of art in 6th-9th century north



THE HUNTERSTON BROOCH: front and back views. C. 700 A.D.

decoration reminds one of some of the illuminated pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels, Anglo-Saxon and continental Germanic metal-work had long gone in for similarly diversified decoration. The granulated and twisted wire-work in gold was part of the same heritage. In contrast the shape of the brooch is an enlargement and elaboration of a type that had developed in the Celtic parts of the British Isles. Also of purely Celtic type are the panels of spirals cast in relief on the back.

One could, though it has never been done, go on for pages analysing the Hunterston Brooch, and that is where part of its fascination

Britain had withered, largely under the impact of the Norse invaders. Norman and Gothic styles in due course were transplanted from the south. Then in Argyllshire and the Isles there arose artists who drew inspiration from the surviving Celtic crosses and combined animals, spirals and interlace designs with Gothic leaves and tendrils, and scenes of the Passion. Many of the large oblong gravestones that they carved recapture the skilful surface diaper of the older stones. They are to be seen at Iona and in many little churchyards, far too often worn and half buried in the turf. The lovely slim upright crosses are rarer, like that in a





PART OF A CROSS FROM TEXA, ISLAY

Above: Front view

15TH CENTURY A.D.

Right: Back View

secluded glen at Lerags near Oban. Some stones have large warriors in relief, and there are many varieties of design.

To this West Highland art, then, belongs a fragmentary cross-shaft from Texa off Islay, remarkable for the small figure of a warrior on it in high relief. He grips in one hand a long-shafted battle axe, outmoded in England when the Saxons used them at Hastings but which lingered in Scotland till the 17th century as part of our Norse inheritance. With the other hand he grips the scabbard of a large sword, whose pommel is again of Norse deri-

*Curator's Choice*  
 vation. He wears a quilted 'acton'—the lines of such quilting have often been mistaken for the folds of a kilt. The conical helmet, and the 'camail' of chain-mail on his shoulders, would have been already out-of-date elsewhere. An inscription above his head states that this is the cross of Reginald son of John of Islay, perhaps the John who was first Lord of the Isles and died about 1386. On the back of the shaft are two dogs attacking a bounding stag, forming a splendidly decorative group; below is a galley in full sail, with high Norse stem and stern, and above a last trace of scrolls of foliage. In all it is a glimpse of a distinctive and highly original art that flourished to the middle of the 16th century, little influenced by the decorated Gothic and the early Renaissance of lowland Scotland.





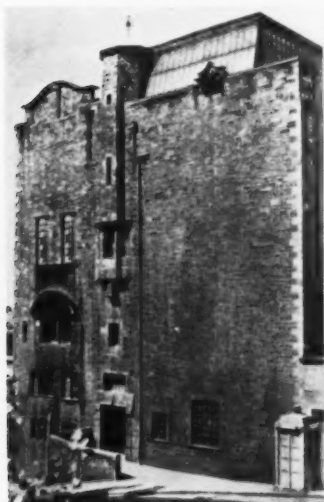
'Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,  
Missing so much and so much?' *Frances Cornford.*

ONE OF the main reasons for the teaching of Art is to inculcate an awareness of beauty in nature and in art.<sup>1</sup> If, as I believe, the appreciation of the one stems automatically from an awareness of the other then in art education the greatest source of artistic inspiration, our whole background of natural history, lies virtually untapped. In its place an unbalanced emphasis has for too long been laid on the importance of art-history, and too high a value placed on the resulting sterile hoard of textbook information masquerading as appreciation. While there is no desire to minimise the importance of art-history in a balanced curriculum it is refreshing to contemplate that many of the greatest works of art were achieved with little known art-history and no books of reference as a background. In this respect Giotto, who laboured with perhaps more limited means than any painter since, still remains a giant and even the men of Altamira did remarkably well

without access to the library of the British Museum.

The direct approach to natural sources is especially vital to the designer and to the architect. His problems are more complex than those of the painter; he must enquire more deeply because he has the additional, and to him, the most important aspect of function to consider. But what more infinite, stimulating and untrammelled field of research could he find? Constantly revealing new horizons as science probes more deeply, microscopic and telescopic enquiry both unfold the same organised planning which is the basis of all design. Then further, in search of the aesthetic solution he finds no problem whether of form (inevitably following function), colour, proportion, texture or line which nature has not already solved effectively and pleasingly. To make this source available to the student through a new awareness, his

<sup>1</sup> Handbook for Teachers (*H.M. Stationery Office*)



CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH  
GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART



CRATHES CASTLE



CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH, "LE FORT  
MAILLET" Water-colour, 11½ x 10½ ins.

A happy balance between art-history (national) and natural-history.

CRYSTAL PALACE  
VIEW FROM KENSINGTON  
GARDENS

BY ROBERT CARRICK

The Crystal Palace—  
1,851 feet long, 450 feet  
broad, 66 feet high, was the  
first example of mass  
production on a grand scale.

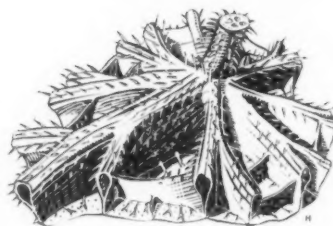
All material used was  
interchangeable. Paxton  
prepared the detailed  
drawings; had complete  
estimates ready in one week.

Every glass factory in  
Britain worked  
exclusively on the project  
for nine months.



LILY LEAF

The underside of the Victoria Regia leaf.  
'A beautiful example of natural engineering', said Joseph Paxton.  
'Nature has provided the leaf with longitudinal and transverse  
girders and supports that I have adopted in this building.'



FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN 1951: The Transport Pavilion  
Architects and Designers: Arcon

At this centenary of the Great Exhibition, homage  
was unconsciously paid to Joseph Paxton, not  
only in the freshness of its architecture and  
engineering but in a new approach to nature  
through the medium of the microscope—the use  
of crystal structure as an inspiration for pattern  
in industrial design. Leading manufacturers in  
many fields were invited by the Council of  
Industrial Design to engage in this experiment.  
Mr. Hugh McKenna, chief designer with Messrs.  
Templeton, played a notable part in this venture.

*Awareness*

training must be directed towards the development and enrichment of feeling, sensation and thought so that his intellectual and emotional powers are stimulated for creative work.

The Bauhaus, founded in Germany in 1919 by that great architect and teacher Walter Gropius, was inaugurated with the specific purpose of realising this aim. Gropius insisted that the student must not study the master but the principles and facts which the master himself studied. Indeed, in his own work, characterised by a freshness and an uncompromising directness, there is little evidence of tradition. It is not surprising that he reacted so strongly to the 'revivals' of the nineteenth century.

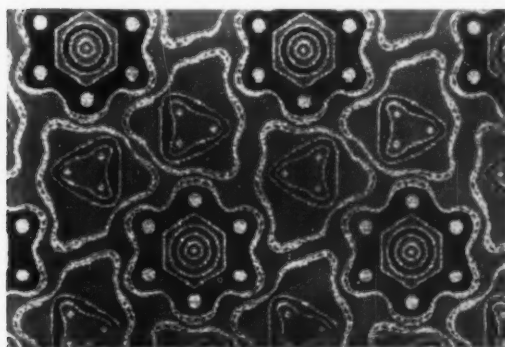
This century in Britain was remarkable for its engineers rather than its architects. Although the country was passing through the greatest revolution in its history, the architects were obliged, through lack of imagination, to dream up a 'revival' from time to time. This depressing background serves to highlight the remarkable achievement of one man, Joseph Paxton, who, in one brief moment of awareness infused a new vitality into an almost dead art. (Barry's 'Mother of Parliaments' is now permanently in an iron lung.) In 1850 the architects of Britain were invited to submit designs in competition for a vast structure in which to house the projected Great Exhibition, brain-child of the Prince Consort. But the twelve hundred competitors who responded—bogged down in traditional building methods

and the Gothic Revival—failed dismally to meet the challenge and failed in particular to grasp the problem of speed in construction. Joseph Paxton, a gardener with a keen interest in tropical lilies, nursed an idea. The simple dramatic story is told here in the illustrations.

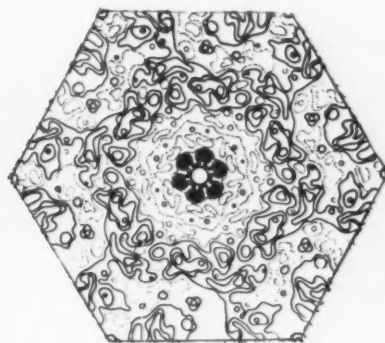
Again at the turn of the century, the individual awareness of Charles Rennie Mackintosh also found expression in competition, this time for the design of a School of Art in Glasgow, in which he was successful at the age of twenty-eight. Like Gropius, Mackintosh found time to paint, inspired more by the face of Scotland than by the classical, comical, tragical masks worn by the buildings of his predecessors and contemporaries. His landscape paintings evidence a deep awareness in Nature of the character, form, colour and texture of the builders' raw materials, and an awareness of his native background which plays no small part in the achievement of a unique national character in all his work . . . 'true to time, place, environment and purpose.'<sup>2</sup> He was thus able while he lived and worked to reverse the powerful tide of continental influences—an honour shared only with Constable—tempering the unbounding exuberance of the Art Nouveau Movement throughout northern Europe.

At this time the 'invention' of Khaki (contemporary term: Thames Green) had, by meeting nature half way, afforded our armies in South Africa a measure of protection. So efficacious were the new uniforms that their

<sup>2</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright.



CARPET DESIGN BY MESSRS. TEMPLETON



CRYSTAL STRUCTURE OF INSULIN UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



The Danish Student models here from a section of giant hemlock, from gourds, fruits, vegetables and insects.

colour, believed to possess magical properties, was employed experimentally on a battleship! Their Lordships were 'unaware' and needless to say, the experiment failed. In a more recent conflict the new pattern of warfare—in which industries and homes were exposed to air-attack—gave a new urgency to the problem of camouflage. In the early days the challenge was met with thousands of tons of paint meaninglessly employed in a new Cubist Revival, ostensibly turning gasometers into houses-of-cards. Our pilots often pin-pointed their training flights by installations 'camouflaged' in the 'sore-thumb' technique. The solution to this vexed problem with global implications could have been solved by an alert child of ten observing a corncrake on its nest. Whether the problem arose in the misty twilight of the British Isles, in the sun-drenched featureless desert, or in the jungle, Nature, having some experience in that other relentless battle of survival in the animal kingdom, solved it on

*Awareness*

the spot. In our eventual observation of the form, colour, texture and tone of birds, beasts and insects in relation to their habitat, and the principles involved in their application, we learned the lessons of survival.

The highest *general* standard of taste is probably to be found in present-day Denmark. Here, in a country that lives—by reason of an agricultural economy—perhaps closer to the soil than any other in Europe, it is not surprising to find adherence to the Gropius creed. For instance, there the art-student models not from the dismembered, bloodless, paint-obscured parts of an unrecognisable Michael Angelo but from the living things of the land. An organic simplicity and vitality characterise the country's crafts as a whole. Strong men, gloveless, unblushingly tend their window-boxes.

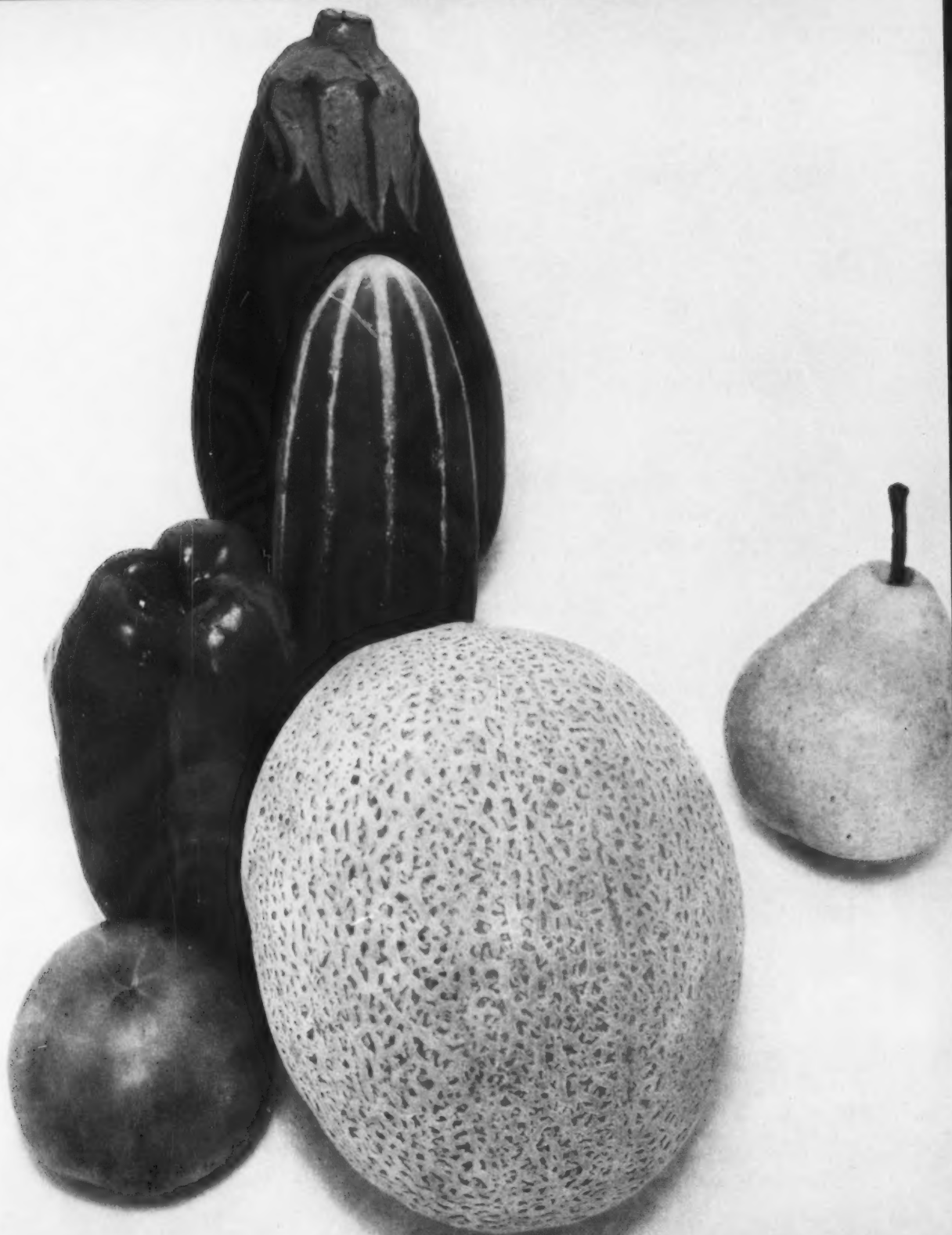
*Right*—These beautiful natural forms have inspired craftsmen in metals, clay and glass from earliest times. Indeed, some, whole or in sections, still meet a primitive need for functional (and beautiful) utensils.

(By courtesy of 'House and Garden'.  
Photo: Mr. William Grigsby)



Typical Danish Pottery—Saxbo-Copenhagen.

*The cost of the illustrations of this article has been met by a very generous donation from the National Bank of Scotland.*







JOAN EARDLEY

GLASGOW CHILDREN  
*Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 ins.*

'The colour-plate serves to show how the artist finds a vivid fire of colour flowering fiercely in the uncompromising grey morass of a depressed area.'

*(See article by R. H. Westwater, pages 2 to 6).*





COURBET

STUDY OF FRUIT—PEARS  
Oil on panel, 8 × 10 ins.

*From a Private Collection*

Three small apples, posed on a cream-coloured plate with blue rim, similar to that shown above—this is the description of the small Courbet panel (it measured  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  ins.) which John Forbes White brought from Paris to Aberdeen in 1874, but which unfortunately cannot be traced. With it came the *Souvenir d'Italie* by Corot now in the Glasgow Art Gallery, and believed to be the first work by the artist ever to be brought to Scotland.

*(See article by Charles Carter, pages 27-30).*



S. J. PEPLOE

SWEETHEART ABBEY  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 ins.

KIRKCALDY'S RICHES—Continued from page 10.

is history painting of an unusually convincing sort. *The Wave*, with its long green swell, is one of a few paintings in which he restrained his natural exuberance in the interests of focal composition. And there are several other representative works, though the great *Storm* was absent, at the time of my visit, on a U.S. tour.

A family quality is given to the Kirkcaldy collection by the presence not only of a Stockholm study by the contemporary William McTaggart, grandson of his namesake, but of paintings by the two sons of S. J. Peploe, Willie and Denis—a still life by the latter even including a flowered tureen which also appears

in one of his father's compositions.

Other contemporaries represented include David A. Donaldson, whose *Pink Room* is a sensitive study of the nude, and Lily R. McDougall, by a striking self portrait in her own restrained but quite original and unmistakable style.

There might be those in the West who would dispute a London writer's claim that Kirkcaldy possesses 'the Tate Gallery of Scotland'. It is, after all, Edinburgh not Glasgow which lacks facilities for the permanent display of contemporary art. But where *multum in parvo* is concerned, the Kirkcaldy collection must surely stand unrivalled, even by the Tate itself.

## COSTUME AND FASHION

ONE DOES NOT associate romance with the card index system, and yet when these cards deal with a museum's collection of costume, the romance is not far to seek. In 'The Art of English Costume' Dr. Willett Cunnington writes, 'the Art of Costume needs the active co-operation of artist, client and spectators together, and it is that which gives it its human quality, to be seen at its best not in the austerity of museums but in the bustle of life'. No one could question the truth of this statement, yet the museum gives valuable service to the community in that it is the repository for articles of great historical interest and importance, not least the dresses and accessories of past times.

The costume collection in Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum has been growing steadily in recent years. It is delightful when the 'human quality' is discovered amid descriptive details. Here is one example, 'Cape of carrot merino lined with glazed silesia and edged with white silk—used at donor's christening in 1861'. The cape is in fact a carrying robe and the added information conjures up a picture which puts the garment into its exact time and setting, thereby greatly increasing our interest in it. Other cards hold equally absorbing facts. 'Dress of white, embroidered in red, yellow, white and black with insets of lace. Material woven and embroidered by Roumanian peasants and worn by donor on a visit to that country'. And again 'Evening dress, hobble skirt, worn at the R.A. Reception 1913'. The men are not completely neglected either. How one sighs for the days when a gentleman of Glasgow wore 'vest, single-breasted of pale grey corded silk with leaf pattern in blue and silver . . . five gold buttons of lover's knots. c. 1850'.

Social distinction in dress was the rule until the first world war. Perhaps the designers of 1911 realised instinctively that we were near the end of an era when they launched the

hobble skirt, that sophisticated fashion which was to be the delight of periodicals such as *Punch* and such a danger to its wearers. Though generally worn, extreme examples could be adopted only by the leisured class. Evidence of wealth, was, of course, frequently demonstrated by the use of materials not practical for humbler folk. There is in the collection a dress of the year 1905 of materials so perishable and unserviceable, that it could seldom have been worn before it came to Kelvingrove. The entry in the register says: 'embroidered with leaves, gold sequins and flowers of champagne-coloured silk, in relief'. To the historian of the future, the general level of fashion throughout all classes in the mid 20th century will certainly be interpreted as one manifestation of the welfare state.



PETRUS CHRISTUS

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN



EGLANTINE SATIN BALL DRESS, 1956 by Michael Sherard.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to see clearly the pattern of one's own time. The war years were notable for an austerity new in our history. Political events have always affected fashion profoundly. It was not surprising that the 'new look' of 1948 represented a swing towards ultra-feminine styles, and a revival of the full draped skirt of the eighteen-eighties. A similar revival has appeared this year. Illustrated is an evening dress from *Vogue*, September, 1956, and a dress from the collection of

about 1878. Styles never repeat themselves, but a motive from the past is often apparent. It is, however, bewildering to find in 1956 a number of revivals from very different eras. The slim high waisted evening dresses of to-day have been inspired by neo-classical dress of about 1805. There was a classical revival also in 1909, but to-day's version is more sophisticated than either. Again in *Vogue*, September 1956, appeared a hat by Dior which had much in common with the modified hennin worn in this country and in Flanders in the late fifteenth century. The portrait by the Flemish painter Petrus Christus illustrates this point. The late



DRESS OF WHITE CORDED SILK, 1878.

fifteenth century was a time of great stress in Europe, as was the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both periods were noted for extremes of style.

Also noticeable in recent times has been the attempt to revive the brief skirt, low waist-line and straight jackets of the nineteen-twenties, a style which may have been tolerable for the young, but which sat unhappily on the older woman. One wonders if the dance craze of the twenties and the styles of these years have repeated themselves. Mr. Laver says, 'Some day a social history of the nineteen-twenties will be written: it will be a strange story, comparable in many ways with the story of the Directoire, but even more abandoned, more cynical, more extravagant. There was a craze



DRESS OF WHITE MUSLIN, with gold spot pattern, c. 1805.



WHITE LACE BALL DRESS, 1956 by Hardy Amies.

for dancing similar to that which always takes place after great disasters. There was such a craze after the Black Death, and also after the French Revolution'. Does our jiving and 'rock 'n roll' fit into this pattern?

In a brief article it is possible to touch on only a few of the factors which govern the fashion of any period. The scientific discoveries of the 19th century certainly deserve our consideration. The sewing machine came into general use in the middle fifties—a fact which



one must hold in mind when dating a dress of around that period. Chemists of the 19th century constantly experimented with new dyeing processes, making possible the vivid hues of dress materials in the seventies. New materials come on the market, none more significant than in our own day when manufacturers produce crease-resisting fabrics, together with nylon, terylene and many others, to assist the woman who no longer can call on her domestic staff to deal with her wardrobe. The story of this decade is still to be written, and what an exciting one it promises to be!

For those who would pursue the matter further, some sources of information may be of interest. In the last one hundred and fifty years, the photograph and the fashion plate provide us with invaluable data from which to work. The fashion plate, however, should be viewed with due caution, and as often as possible compared with existing dresses. Dr. Willett Cunnington writes amusingly on this subject. He says, 'A gallery of these idealised figures would portray the eternal triumph of Hope over Experience, for too often they dangle before us pictures of the unattainable . . . We watch the Junoesque creature of Edwardian days presently transfigured into a flattened schoolboy (after the first Great War) and to-day, seven feet high, she stalks across the pages of the fashion journal with slinky legs, bony hips and a hawk-like physiognomy.'



EVENING DRESS OF FINE BLACK NET, trimmed with silk flowers and sequins. c. 1905.

#### *Costume and Fashion*

If one goes further back there are portraits, memorial brasses, illuminations, frescoes, tapestries, diaries and household inventories to help us to conjure up a picture of the past. It is of interest to note, too, that much of the writing on the subject was, and is, done by men. Samuel Pepys is a notable example. "July 1st, 1660, 'This morning came home my fine Camlett cloak, with gold buttons, and a silk suit, which cost me much money, and I pray God to make me able to pay for it.'" "31st October, 1663, 'Thence to the office,

where busy till night, and then to prepare my monthly account, about which I staid till 10 or 11 o'clock at night, and to my great sorrow find myself £43 worse than I was last month. But it hath chiefly arisen from my layings-out in clothes for myself and wife; viz., for her about £12, and for myself £55 or thereabouts;' " Then there follows a description of the purchased garments.

As has been seen, the study of dress is one which leads us into many delightful by-paths of knowledge, enlarging our appreciation not only of the fashion of each age, but of the all-over pattern. The tendency has always been to make practical use of discarded garments, but before any one of us dismembers that model gown, let us pause to consider that the costume of today will be the history of tomorrow. It would be a pity to sabotage our history!



CHARLES CARTER

ART PATRONAGE IN SCOTLAND:  
JOHN FORBES WHITE 1831-1904



BOSBOOM

HOORN CHURCH  
Oil on panel, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13 ins.

SOME PATRONS exert their beneficent influence upon art solely through the commissions which flow from them, providing artists with the material support without which it would be difficult for them to work: the influence of others does not cease when their pictures have been acquired; their enthusiasm, advocacy and advice combine with the silent testimony of their pictures to inspire artists to emulation and the public to copy their own example. They become leaders of taste, creating a climate of opinion favourable to the production and appreciation of art. Such a one was John Forbes White, the Aberdeen miller, who occupies an important place in the history

of art patronage in Scotland.

He was a friend and contemporary of Alexander Macdonald, whose collecting was the subject of a recent article in the *Scottish Art Review*. Both men shared in, and contributed to, the growing prosperity of Aberdeen which made possible the existence in the city of a colony of artists; both men fell heir to family businesses which became, of necessity, their primary concern, leaving art as the interest of their leisure.

Alexander Macdonald's collecting of pictures and his friendship with artists were a means of occupying leisure hours which through crippling illness could not be spent

in more active pursuits. The Macdonald Collection is the only, if yet an important, memorial to his patronage.

John Forbes White's collecting was one only of his art interests and part of a wide general culture. He was a pioneer photographer and political worker, classical scholar and university administrator, and an innovator and leader in his own industry, as well as being an art lover. Touching life at many points he was able to extend more widely an influence upon the art of his time which is to be measured less by the size of his collection than by the stimulus he gave to young artists and by his active propaganda. His was not the patronage of commissions and collecting only; it was creative enthusiasm and therein lies its importance.

J. F. White was born in Aberdeen in 1831. At school and university he laid the foundations of a lifelong love of the classics but after graduating in Arts he proceeded to a medical course. He had completed a first and prize-winning year when he had to take the place, in the family flour milling business, of his elder brother who became a missionary. In Forbes White, too, there was something of the missionary. He believed in the ennobling influence of art and he sought to proselytize for his faith by hanging pictures upon his walls and those of art galleries and by a constant advocacy by word and pen.

Though his collection of pictures was never the size of that of Alexander Macdonald—perhaps flour milling was never so lucrative as granite polishing—and was partially dispersed during his lifetime, it was well chosen and included important works by the Barbizon School painters, by the Dutch romantic painters who were coming into prominence in the third quarter of the 19th century, and by his Scottish contemporaries.

His Corot, *Souvenir of Italy*, bought in 1873 and now in the Glasgow Art Gallery, is said to have been the first work by the artist to be brought into Scotland.

In 1885 he bought that key picture of the Glasgow School, Guthrie's *Highland Funeral*. Like the Corot, it now rests in Glasgow as does

an Orchardson which was formerly his; indeed several of his pictures are now in important public collections. *The Interior of the Baker's Church at Haarlem*, a much admired Bosboom and greatly appreciated gift by a later owner to the National Gallery, is now, under the title *Hoorn Church*, the only work by the artist in the Tate Gallery<sup>1</sup>, while a prized possession was a *Study of Fruit* by Courbet, similar to the one reproduced in colour on page 21, but which unfortunately cannot be traced.

His enthusiasm was creative because his pictures were used to inspire love, first in himself and then in others.

They were certainly an inspiration to himself. They were closer to his heart than to his pocket. In 1892, he had to part with the Corot. When it hung for the last night upon his walls before being dispatched to Reid, the locomotive engineer, he wrote in his diary a long panegyric upon the picture which had been, 'my friend and adviser for eighteen years my standard of ideal, yet true, landscape . . . The knowledge of a lifetime is concentrated here . . . I let it go with a mixture of joy and sorrow. Joy that it has been to us such a source of pure pleasure and because my judgment is confirmed. But parting with a friend always brings pain.'

At the International Exhibition of 1862 he admired, and bought, a landscape *Drenthe* by a young Dutchman, G. A. Mollinger of Utrecht. Once the picture had arrived at his home he could not rest until he had infected with his enthusiasm the twenty-one year old George Reid, then emerging from his apprenticeship as a lithographic artist and spending much of his leisure painting small landscapes with figures near Aberdeen. The infection 'took'. Reid went to Utrecht to study with Mollinger and laid the foundations of that professional career which was to make him the leading portrait painter in Scotland and the President of the Royal Scottish Academy. When White acquired a Diaz flower piece, it was shewn proudly to his artist friends

<sup>1</sup> Within recent months this painting has been transferred to the National Gallery.

John Forbes White

and ultimately proved to be the 'father' of a whole series of flower paintings by Reid and others. Whilst the Corot was in his possession it was seen and admired by George Paul Chalmers who was inspired by it to paint his *Autumn Morning*.

In such ways was his influence felt by the young artists. He became the point around which revolved a number of the Scottish painters, notably the Reids, and some prominent members of the Scott Lauder group.

His friendship and intimate association with these young artists was at its closest in the 1870's. They were frequent guests at his house; either they came to stay and painted pictures or they came to paint pictures and stayed. Chalmers was there in 1873, painting *The end of the Harvest*, and a year later to paint the portrait of *Aitchie* now at Aberdeen. Hugh Cameron stayed at the house painting heads of two of the children and in 1881 William Stott of Oldham stayed six weeks whilst painting a full-length portrait of Alice White.

Foreign artists were included too. Soon after his purchase of the Mollinger he went to Holland to meet the artist and in following years he paid many visits during which he was a welcome guest in the studios.

He begged Mollinger to come to Aberdeen and the visit would have been made but for the artist's untimely death. Through Mollinger he met Josef Israels, who did come to Aber-



COROT

PASTORALE—SOUVENIR D'ITALIE  
Oil on canvas, 67 x 56 ins.

deen, painting there and going on a noteworthy journey to Braemar and down the Spittal of Glen-shee in the company of White, Chalmers and Hugh Cameron, when the colour of the empurpled moors rendered Chalmers speechless and moved Israels to the comment that he now knew whence the Scottish painters got their colour.

Like Alexander Macdonald, White preferred to buy his pictures direct from the artists. His purchase at the International Exhibition was

the first of a number of works bought from Mollinger, who was encouraged to send his work for exhibition to the Royal Scottish Academy. When the artist died at the early age of thirty-six, White hurried over to Holland to attend the funeral and returned with a bundle of canvases which he persuaded his friends to buy, to the greater advantage of the artist's family. Thus is explained the small 'corner' in Mollingers which exists in Aberdeen. White used Mollinger as a go-between to get canvases from Israels and when told that Josef Maris was under contract to a dealer and could not sell direct he offered to buy the artist out of his obligation.

The fellowship established, through Forbes White, between the young Scottish painters and their Dutch contemporaries, confirmed the continuing inspiration of the Dutch paintings upon his own walls, and was not without its influence upon the outlook and technique



G. A. MOLLINGER  
MEERKIRK—CLEARING UP AFTER RAIN Oil on canvas, 15½ × 26 ins.

of the Scots.

Mollinger's landscapes contained a truth of tone, a poetic imagination and a soundness of design the influence of which was salutary at a time when Scottish landscape tended towards the multiplication of picturesque but insignificant details. Josef Israels so far recaptured Rembrandt's expressive use of chiaroscuro in his poetic renderings of the more pathetic aspects of the lives of the Dutch fisher folk as to demonstrate that the sorrows of the poor can be as legitimate a subject-matter for art as the tragic fates of the heroes of myth and history. Millet-like he made the trivial sublime. His work appealed both pictorially and temperamentally to George Paul Chalmers, through whom the Rembrandtesque entered into 19th century Scottish painting, and to the genre predilections of the Scottish painters.

W. D. McKay has expressed the opinion that painting by the tone values came to Scotland not direct from Paris into which it had been introduced in mid-century but from Holland. This was an important step forward in the more truthful rendering of the natural scene for which White and his protégés must largely have been responsible. George Reid's *Montrose* in the Aberdeen Gallery, painted in the 1880's is one of the earliest, as it is one of the most masterly, examples of tone value painting in Scotland.

Forbes White's ardour was so infectious that it stimulated others besides his young artist friends and so irrepressible that it could not be denied expression through the written and spoken word. He was in great demand as a lecturer upon art. In articles in the *Contem-*

*porary Review* and elsewhere he was so successful in interpreting the works of his favourite painters and in communicating the pleasure that they gave him that he was invited to become the art critic of *The Academy*, a post which his business and distance from London compelled him to decline.

Nor was White's enthusiasm limited to 19th century painters; it embraced Old Masters whose works were beyond the reach of his purse—above all Rembrandt and Velasquez. When his friend Robertson Smith was editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Forbes White was invited to contribute the articles on these two masters, as well as those on Vermeer and the Victorian painter, Poole. The article on Rembrandt received the praise of Josef Israels whose knowledge and understanding of his great forerunner was profound.

Perhaps his most notable critical writing was the analysis and appreciation of the work of George Paul Chalmers which he added to Alexander Gibson's biography.

Forbes White was active in all that made for a wider appreciation of art. The muses must have temples if they are to receive the homage of the multitude; for art, there must be art galleries, which were lacking in White's native Aberdeen until his tireless advocacy brought one into being. He was the leading organizer of the exhibitions of art and industrial art which marked its opening and kept it alive until a permanent collection had been acquired.

The extension to the Gallery opened in 1905 was partly rendered necessary by the acquisition of the Macdonald Collection, but it was largely built to house an important and comprehensive collection of plaster casts which were provided by public subscription.

The accomplishment of the scheme owed much to the driving force of Sir James Murray, the Chairman of the Art Gallery Committee, but it was conceived by Forbes White. An enthusiasm for the classics in which he had been nurtured had led White to a love for Greek sculpture and a realization of all that it had contributed to European Art. This enthusiasm was as infectious as that for Rembrandt and modern Dutch art; once felt it had to be shared. He suggested that Aberdeen, with its craft of carved granite, should have a collection of masterpieces of sculpture. He lectured so persuasively on the subject of 'The Sculptural Monuments of the Greeks' that a public meeting was convened the next day at which it was resolved that such a collection should be formed. Unfortunately he died a few months before the scheme was realized.

In 1888 he settled in Dundee to be nearer his new modern mill. As a recognition of his services to art a body of subscribers then presented to the Art Gallery his portrait by Sir George Reid whilst he made a parting gift to the Art Gallery of Roelofs *Nenuphars*. But he still spent his summers at Seaton Cottage by the Don. He was still active in art projects, and to the end of his life a member of the Art Gallery Committee.

DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS

## ON THE PANEL BY COSIMO ROSSELLI AT EDINBURGH

I HAVE BEEN asked to write about the Cosimo Rosselli panel at Edinburgh and do so with pleasure because the picture has long meant a lot for me. It was the first original Old Master picture to excite me as a youth. It was the first picture about which I ever tried to write, and it was the first picture in which I encountered that charming pair, Tobias and the Angel.

When I was a boy the National Gallery at Edinburgh had fewer foreign pictures and more Scottish ones. I loved the Scottish Pictures, particularly the kind that told a story. (They are nearly all excluded now). But the Old Masters were a closed book. It was John Duncan who first helped me to 'see' the Old Masters. John Duncan, R.S.A. was a painter of 'tales of delight'. He was a good talker and kind to young people. His own work was decorative rather than painterly in character. He had to make easel pictures for the Exhibitions but he should have been designing murals, tapestries, mosaics, posters etc. Everything he did was conceived of as pattern, with strong outlines, flat forms and gay colours. I loved his work and listened when he spoke one day about the Rosselli panel at the Mound. When I looked at the panel I saw it was akin to Duncan's own work, being simple and symmetrical in arrangement and telling its story clearly. I saw too that the black and white robes of the Dominicans were beautifully patterned over the panel and that the five large golden haloes made a noble row across the upper part. The pyramidal shape made by the seated central figure was impressive and the colours applied with egg-tempera were subtle and harmonious. Withal it charmed me then and still does. It is not a great picture but it is a very pretty period piece indeed.

*St. Catherine of Siena as the Spiritual Mother of the Second and Third Orders of St. Dominic*—that is the title of this large panel, about 5½ feet



ROSSELLI *St. Catherine of Siena as the spiritual mother of the Second and Third Orders of St. Dominic.*

*Tempera on panel, 66½ × 67 ins.*

square. It was purchased in 1911 for the National Gallery of Scotland. The great Saint sits on a marble throne in her Dominican robes. She crushes underfoot a writhing red devil. The artist has drawn her larger in scale than the other figures, because she is the central, important personage in the picture; and indeed the historic Catherine of Siena was one of the greatest women who ever lived. Like St. Francis she received the Stigmata (the wounds of Christ crucified) and together with Francis she is the Patron Saint of Italy.

In one hand St. Catherine holds out an open book and in the other a scroll. The book is extended to Sisters dressed like herself. The scroll goes to a woman clad entirely in black. Beside this woman kneel three others, two of them probably sisters of the Second Order; but a third is clad in lay garments of green and scarlet. All kneel in prayer at the feet of the throne.

Behind the kneeling women stand four attendant Saints. Naturally St. Dominic, founder of



the order of preaching friars (or blackfriars) is himself an interested spectator. He can easily be identified by his garb and by the lily and book which he carries. Another Dominican spectator is St. Peter Martyr (very popular with Italian Old Masters). Peter, on some Inquisitorial errand to Milan, was murdered on a lonely road. He can always be identified by his habit, by his martyr's palm and by the hatchet embedded in his head. Besides Dominic stands Laurence with deacon's gown and martyr's palm; and beside Peter Martyr stands Raphael. It was Raphael, the beautiful Archangel, who conducted Tobias on his matrimonial journey, a favourite theme of the Old Masters. Raphael holds in his right hand the box of ointment with which Tobias exorcised the Devil. He has his left hand on the shoulder of the youth and is shewing him the box. Tobias of course carries his emblem, the fish, in this case a pike. Alas, his little dog cannot be seen. How marvellously Rosselli's contemporaries painted the journey of Tobias and the angel through the Val D'Arno!

And now a few words about Rosselli himself. He was a Florentine who flourished in the second half of the Quattrocento, dying in 1507. He was influenced by Gozzoli and Baldovinetti and was himself the master of that Piero who took his name, Cosimo's Piero, Piero di Cosimo. Vasari was not impressed by Cosimo though he gave him a place in the *Lives*. His works he says were 'moderately good' *ragionevoli*.

Nevertheless in 1482 Cosimo was summoned to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV to take part in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel. Among his colleagues were men of genius like Botticelli, Signorelli, Perugino and Ghirlandaio. Vasari says that Pope Sixtus offered an award to the artist who wrought the finest picture in the Chapel. Although he had Piero to help him, Cosimo felt his own inferiority to such redoubtable masters. Accordingly he had recourse to cunning. Shrewdly suspecting that the Supreme Pontiff's taste would be lush and unintellectual he lavished upon his pictures the richest blues and golds he could find and made everything sparkle. When the works were uncovered for the assessment, the other Masters hooted with laughter at Cosimo's pictures. But the laugh was to be with Rosselli. The Pope awarded him the prize and ordered his dumfounded rivals 'to cover their pictures with the best azures that could be found and to touch them with gold that they might be equal to those of Cosimo in splendour and richness of colour'.

## LIGHT INTO ART

**L**IGHT IS and always has been of necessity a fundamental preoccupation of the artist, but whereas to the artist of the post-renaissance light has been primarily a problem of representation, to the artist of the middle ages it was primarily a problem of manipulation—how to use light for artistic effects.

These two different approaches to the same phenomenon are doubtless linked with the different outlooks and artistic purposes of the two periods, but they are also closely linked with their varying technical resources.

It was, of course, the invention of oil painting that made possible the rendering of the play of light on solid of Van Eyck, the penetration of light into darkness of Rembrandt, or into atmosphere of Monet and the French Impressionists, achievements quite beyond the scope of fresco and tempera painting.

In the paintings of the middle ages and early quattrocento, there is little attempt to imitate light—the most intense light, the light of haloes and rays, is indicated rather than represented by the symbolism of gold paint—and yet the paintings of these periods are as it were made of light, the light which, technically speaking, is reflected through the translucent egg paint from the white gesso ground.

This use of light in art is even more impressively exploited in mediaeval stained and painted glass, a technique which may be described as perhaps one of the most perfect and satisfying unions of nature and art.

In the exhibition of stained glass from the Burrell Collection on the south balcony at Kelvingrove, artificial light has had to be substituted for natural light, with the exception of the two panels set in the windows at either end of the balcony, and only a very small proportion of this extraordinary collection can be shown. Now Sir William Burrell has decided to transfer to Glasgow most of the panels from the windows of Hutton Castle. This must be a sad occasion both for him and for Lady Burrell, for with the stained glass will go one of the glories of a beautiful home, but,

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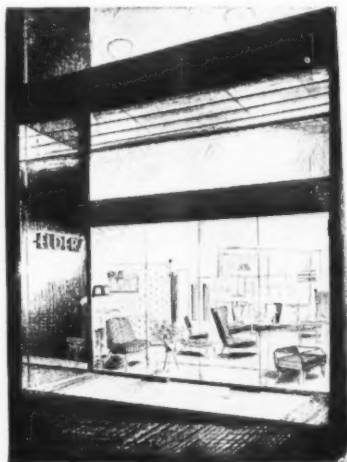
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